

U.S. Department of Education
2013 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program
A Public School - 13NC2

	Charter	Title 1	Magnet	Choice
School Type (Public Schools):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Name of Principal: Mr. Jeremiah McCluney

Official School Name: Rutherford Early College High

School Mailing Address: 286 ICC Loop Road
Spindale, NC 28160-0804

County: Rutherford State School Code Number*: 810385

Telephone: (828) 395-4190 E-mail: jsmcclun@rcsnc.org

Fax: (828) 288-0285 Web site/URL: http://reach.rcsnc.org/

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that all information is accurate.

_____ Date _____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*: Dr. Janet Mason Superintendent e-mail: jmason@rcsnc.org

District Name: Rutherford County Schools District Phone: (828) 288-2200

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that it is accurate.

_____ Date _____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Dr. John Mark Bennett

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

_____ Date _____
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

**Non-Public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Director, National Blue Ribbon Schools (Aba.Kumi@ed.gov) or mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) or its equivalent each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's AYP requirement or its equivalent in the 2012-2013 school year. Meeting AYP or its equivalent must be certified by the state. Any AYP status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take foreign language courses.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2007 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for that period.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 or 2012.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district 10 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 5 High schools
 0 K-12 schools
 18 Total schools in district
2. District per-pupil expenditure: 8456

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located: Small city or town in a rural area
4. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 6
5. Number of students as of October 1, 2012 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	21	26	47
10	21	25	46
11	15	17	32
12	14	16	30
Total in Applying School:			155

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
1 % Asian
6 % Black or African American
7 % Hispanic or Latino
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
83 % White
2 % Two or more races
100 % Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2011-2012 school year: 2%
This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Step	Description	Value
(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	0
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	3
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	3
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2011	155
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.02
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	2

8. Percent of English Language Learners in the school: 1%
Total number of ELL students in the school: 2
Number of non-English languages represented: 1
Specify non-English languages:

Spanish

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 50%

Total number of students who qualify: 77

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-priced school meals program, supply an accurate estimate and explain how the school calculated this estimate.

10. Percent of students receiving special education services: 1%

Total number of students served: 1

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>0</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>
Resource teachers/specialists (e.g., reading specialist, media specialist, art/music, PE teachers, etc.)	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Support staff (e.g., school secretaries, custodians, cafeteria aides, etc.)	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>
Total number	<u>9</u>	<u>6</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1:

26:1

13. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	97%	85%	0%

14. **For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools):**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2012.

Graduating class size:	<u>42</u>
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	<u>81%</u>
Enrolled in a community college	<u>7%</u>
Enrolled in vocational training	<u>0%</u>
Found employment	<u>12%</u>
Military service	<u>0%</u>
Other	<u>0%</u>
Total	<u>100%</u>

15. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award:

☒ No

☐ Yes

If yes, what was the year of the award?

PART III - SUMMARY

Rutherford Early College High School's mission is to prepare students to be future-ready and globally competitive by providing a rigorous, innovative curriculum in a 21st Century learning environment. Partnered with Isothermal Community College and North Carolina's New Schools initiative, Rutherford Early College High School (REaCH) is a student-centered, public high school. Students receive an accelerated academic program in a technology-integrated classroom focused on small supportive learning communities. Students at REaCH obtain their high school diploma while concurrently completing their Associate's degree without incurring the cost of tuition or textbooks. The expectation is that EVERY student will graduate with a high school and community college diploma, debt-free, and ready for college, careers, and life.

Through a stratified lottery process, REaCH targets a population of first-generation college students (neither parent has a four-year degree) with low socioeconomic status. Students from any traditional school in the district, as well as from local charter schools, private schools, and homeschools are eligible to enter the lottery. Each incoming class is kept purposely small in order to offer a low teacher to student ratio and to foster a sense of community and family among the students, faculty, and staff. Students are also provided MacBooks for school and home use, allowing for seamless integration of technology in a virtually paperless educational environment. All eligible high school courses are taught at the honors level to ensure rigor.

The community served was once a textile juggernaut. Rutherford County has seen traditional industries that once employed tens of thousands (with just a high school diploma or less) shed countless jobs, with most plants closing completely. Our textile mills sit empty, and the unemployment rate is consistently in double digits, among the highest in the state. Local government officials are seeking to recruit technology industries and jobs which require highly-skilled workers, for which we want our students to be ready. The new emerging economy demands workers with skills tailored for the 21st century. This knowledge-based workplace is defined by growing numbers of jobs for people who are able to think critically and to solve problems at levels never before imagined.

Prior to 2005, the educators who worked to create REaCH sought to make the school a stark contrast from traditional comprehensive high schools. Beginning with a single 9th grade class of 35 students in 2005 and by adding a class each fall, REaCH now serves 154 students in grades 9-12. With students who may not have reached their potential in any other setting, REaCH faculty and staff implement challenging standards, create meaningful learning experiences connected to life after high school, and develop supportive relationships between teachers and students. Teachers work together to ensure that every student succeeds. At REaCH, every student reads, writes, thinks, and speaks in every class, every day. Rigor, relevance, relationships, responsibility, and respect are the cornerstones of our school. Collaboration among students, staff, and community members contribute to the school's success.

Among its many accolades, REaCH has achieved Honor School of Excellence status for 2011-2012, with a proficiency rating of 99.3% of students at or above grade level. In addition, REaCH has met Adequate Yearly Progress every year and has also been recognized for the past two years by the NC Department of Public Instruction for its 100% graduation rate. These awards reflect our commitment to help students not only achieve proficiency on state tests, but also show academic growth from one year to the next.

Equally important as achievement measured by assessments is our mission to graduate students who are contributing members of society. Throughout their years at REaCH, students participate in numerous service learning opportunities. Our students take part in service projects with United Way and other charities, and all clubs contain a service component. Our sophomores complete job shadowing

experiences. Every junior completes an internship based on a career interest and a capstone Graduation Project focused on their career of choice, including service learning related to their research.

Educating students to be mindful of “giving back” to our community is foundational component to being a part of REaCH. We strive to ensure our students are future-ready in a globally competitive workforce, while also ensuring their success and a sense of servant leadership. Our school theme is “iConnect,” representing our commitment to foster relationships among students, within the school community, and beyond. One of our most enjoyable traditions is our annual “Back-to-School” camping trip, where the ENTIRE school spends the night at a local Boy Scout camp. Students participate in team-building activities, “Connections,” a time to share feelings, thoughts, and goals, get acquainted with and make freshmen a part of the REaCH family, and forge relationships that will last far beyond high school and college.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results:

A. At Rutherford Early College High School, the North Carolina End of Course (EOC) exams are used to measure the performance and growth levels of students in core content areas. In 2011-2012, students were given Algebra I, English I, and Biology EOC's at the end of the semester in which they completed the course. In order to be deemed proficient in these areas, students must obtain a score of Level 3 or Level 4. A Level 3 score indicates that a student is consistently performing at grade level standards. A level IV indicates a student is academically prepared above grade level and has a superior command of the knowledge and skills contained in the curriculum standards. North Carolina mandates that calculation of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for No Child Left Behind be measured in high schools using Algebra I and English I EOC test scores.

In addition to state and federally-mandated accountability requirements, students at REaCH must take the COMPASS college placement exam to gain entrance into Isothermal Community College courses. In order to place into college-level courses, students must achieve the following scores: Writing, 70; Reading, 81; Algebra, 66; and Pre-Algebra, 47.

All REaCH 10th graders are also required to take the PLAN, which serves as the midpoint measure of academic progress in the ACT's College and Career Readiness System. All 11th graders are required to take the ACT, a nationally-normed test which measures students' general academic development and their ability to complete college-level work.

B. Over the past five years, REaCH has seen student performance on state standardized test scores increase significantly. In 2007-2008 our proficiency percentage was 79.7%. This number climbed steadily over the next five years, and in 2011-2012, our students scored proficient at a rate of 99.3%. Scores in all content areas showed improvement over the past five years. Algebra I EOC scores increased from 88.3% to 100% proficient, and English I EOC scores increased from 90% to 100% proficient. Additionally, our graduation rate over the same period increased from 84.8% to 100%. Contributing to our students' success is our school's 1:1 laptop initiative. Beginning in spring 2008, REaCH was one of six schools in North Carolina chosen to pilot a laptop initiative where every student and teacher received a tablet computer for use at school and home. Immediate access to information and having the world at their fingertips reduced many barriers for our underprivileged students. Suddenly, all students were on an equal playing field and test scores soon accelerated. Students who had previously lacked the necessary tools to succeed were provided with the same opportunities for success.

Contributing to our students' gains, seen in our data tables, is our school's commitment to using 21st century learning tools. As students and teachers integrated the technology, the rigor and relevance of lessons also increased. Teachers developed cross-curricular lesson plans focused on Big Ideas, integrating Web tools seamlessly into daily lessons and projects. Teachers were able to focus on increasing the rigor and relevance of lessons instead of on securing the needed materials to teach their content area. Our school is now virtually paperless, employing a learning management system known as ANGEL, which houses all course documents, assessments, and student grades and is accessible by both students and parents. Increased test scores were a direct result of improved student engagement and increased rigor in each content area.

Another contributor to our students' success has been the implementation of a Freshmen Academy curriculum. All incoming 9th graders take this study skills course to help ease the transition from middle school to high school and college. This course also features a team-building component to foster a sense of connection among students and to build leadership capacity. We have also implemented an ACT/SAT prep course to improve students' test-taking skills and lessen their anxiety over standardized tests. Our

struggling students have been supported in their academics by after-school tutoring, as well. All high school teachers offer tutoring for at least 45 minutes each day after school. Additionally, we schedule Fridays as half days of instruction to allow for afternoon remediation and individual student support. Math and English teachers offer Supplemental Instruction during the school day where students can get individualized help with both high school and college level courses.

2. Using Assessment Results:

Each school year since the school's inception, REaCH faculty has sought ways to analyze data and increase student success. From student surveys to assessment data disaggregation, REaCH seeks multiple means to solicit information that will spark improvement. Through our annual school improvement process, we gather data on attendance, discipline, EOC scores, course grades, and success rates from both high school and college courses. We look for trends or patterns, particularly among subgroups, to ensure success across all socioeconomic and underrepresented populations. From these data, we plan the next year's specific targets and strategies for improvement. Among initiatives we have developed based on these data are our Supplemental Instruction, Friday Academic Support, Freshman Academy courses, REBOOT remediation, Homework Club, freshman home visits, and the support for our Distance Learning courses. Each change made or new program implemented helps our school evolve, and is monitored as it progresses to ensure its effectiveness.

In addition to quantitative data, we also seek qualitative data from parents, students, and alumni. Our parent advisory council meets bimonthly to discuss issues and new initiatives and solicit feedback from parents and the community. Former students who have gone on to four-year universities often come back to visit, and we purposely question them about improving students' college-readiness. Some of our most successful programs, such as job shadowing and internships, have resulted from the feedback offered by these students.

Our school informs parents about student academic performance by hosting Student-Led Conferences each semester. Students complete a portfolio of high school and college work samples, and show these artifacts to parents with a professional-style presentation and analysis. Students reflect on their opportunities for growth from semester to semester, talk about their development of time management skills, and set goals for future success. Parents evaluate students on these presentations, and faculty advisors rate the portfolios by a set of common student learning outcomes developed and shared with the REaCH and Isothermal faculty. The same faculty advisor remains with a particular group of students until their senior year to foster relationships and continued student growth and accountability.

Our students and their parents are given a copy of the NC Department of Public Instruction's "School Report Card" for REaCH. This document includes a general school profile as well as information about high student performance through assessment data, safe and orderly schools through suspension, expulsion, and attendance data, and teacher quality through teacher turnover rates, experience, and education data. The report also includes the number of fully-licensed teachers and the percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers. Subject-specific test score data by subgroup are reported, as well as attendance rates, graduation rates, student access to books and technology, and the percentage of classrooms connected to the internet. This Report Card is also featured on our school, district, and state education websites and published in the local newspapers.

In addition to school-wide improvements, teachers use data to improve classroom instruction. Each teacher uses a web-based service called EVAAS to access their current students' previous test score data, achievement levels, and predicted level of success on standardized tests. Teachers are able to chart individual student growth from year to year, even beginning several years prior with a consistent standardized test measure. The data includes not only composite scores, but also subject and grade-level specific data, in addition to a breakdown of student performance. From their students' past performance, teachers individualize instruction based on students' documented level of achievement and areas of strength and need for improvement.

Decisions for our Distance Learning Center are also data-driven. We have a large number of students who take online high school courses (from standard to Advanced Placement level) and online college courses. Each semester, our Distance Learning advisor tracks each individual student's progress, requiring a weekly "check in" for each online class to ensure that our students are on-task and performing well in the online environment. Students who are not achieving at least a C are identified and targeted for Academic Support. For the 2011-2012 fall semester, students were enrolled in 153 courses total. Of these, 78% achieved an A or a B. Through SI, tutoring, and remediation efforts, 97% of our students received college credit. For the 2011-2012 spring semester, students were enrolled in 212 courses total. Of these, 84% achieved an A or a B, and 96% earned college credit.

Our comprehensive scheduling process creates small class sizes and allows for individual student scheduling. Every student at REaCH is viewed as a distinctive learner, and his or her path to graduation is unique. Our school counselor, administrator, and college liaison work together to ensure students are on a path to success, graduating from both high school and college.

3. Sharing Lessons Learned:

The faculty at Rutherford Early College has been asked to present professional development sessions and given opportunities to share successful strategies with other schools at the local, district, and state levels. Within our own local district, teachers have presented informative sessions on intensive writing techniques, such as using document-based questions, an Advanced Placement (AP) strategy, and the Literacy Design Collaborative. Our principal and faculty have also shared at a district principals' meeting our use of Critical Friends protocols, modeling the process in order to foster the use of protocols at other schools in the district. Critical Friends protocols help educators work collaboratively in a democratic, reflective community while establishing a foundation for sustained professional development based on a spirit of inquiry. Using the strategy to demonstrate Professional Learning Communities, our principal and a teacher modeled the process, presenting to the entire district's administrative staff and providing a context to understand the process of improvement in teaching and learning in a collegial, non-threatening environment. Our faculty routinely uses this process to improve classroom practice.

In addition to audiences of administrators and other high school teachers, REaCH also hosts middle school teachers and counselors from the feeder middle schools for visits to our campus to discuss our educational models and showcase the daily interactions and methodologies used in our classrooms. This interaction with teachers familiar with our incoming students helps ensure that we reach our target at-risk population and create advocates for our students before they even enter the lottery.

At the regional level, teachers and administration have presented sessions at New Schools Symposiums to teachers from the Western Region of NC focusing on our supportive strategies in our Distance Learning Center. Teachers from across the state affiliated with New Schools' locations have also been the audiences for presentations by REaCH faculty at New Schools' Summer Institute conferences. Among topics presented were our Freshmen Academy model, a program designed by REaCH teachers to help incoming 9th graders make the transition to high school and college by providing study skills, note-taking strategies, organizational models, and time-management techniques they can employ in both their high school and college coursework. REaCH faculty have also led Summer Institute sessions on building relationships between the high school and the community college, as well as modeling instructional protocols and infusing technology into instruction.

4. Engaging Families and Communities:

Our involvement with students and parents begins before our students set foot in the school as 9th graders. In the summer before their admittance, REaCH faculty and staff visit the homes of incoming freshman in order to ease the concerns and fears of students embarking on a nontraditional journey for the start of their high school careers. Taking a "gift bag" containing a school tee-shirt, handbook, college

information, and other items, each teacher makes a connection with incoming freshmen and gets to know them and their home situation in the student's own comfortable environment, allowing parents and students to ask questions before the first day of school. This visit creates a sense of family and community before the students begin their first day at REaCH.

Another strategy for family involvement and student success is Student-Led Conferences (SLCs). Students complete a portfolio of artifacts each semester, organize their work by 21st century learning outcomes aligned to the goals of the school and community college, and present to their parents, dressed as they would be for a job interview. This twice-a-year process allows students to take ownership of their work, and to present their portfolios to their parents as young adults embarking on their professional lives, perhaps taking on an adult role for the first time. Parents take part in a conference that showcases their student's successes, while at the same time recognizing areas in need of growth and improvement.

REaCH faculty and staff keep a continuous line of communication open with parents. ALL teachers contact every student's parents/guardians within the first six weeks with a positive observation about each student. We believe it is important to communicate student successes as well as concerns with parents in order to keep the interactions with school and home on a positive, encouraging note. Whether through home visits, personal contacts, phone calls, e-mails, texts, Skype, or college progress reports, every parent is informed of their students' educations at REaCH.

REaCH Sophomores and Juniors complete job shadowing/internship experiences focused on a career interest. Through partnerships with community leaders and business owners, our students spend time "on-the-job," learning about the day-to-day operations and requirements to be successful in their chosen field. Students return to school, reflect on their experiences, and consider the career as a whole to determine if it is the appropriate path for them.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

At Rutherford Early College High School (REaCH), all students follow an honors-level curriculum that meets the requirements for admission to a four-year university in North Carolina. Additionally, students at REaCH have the opportunity to graduate with their high school diploma and two-year Associate's degree from Isothermal Community College, at no cost to their families.

While we offer the traditional high school requirements of English, Math, Science, and Social Studies, we also offer several classes with curricula designed to support student learning. Our Freshman Academy class helps students make the transition from middle school to high school and college. The curriculum is tailored to individual student needs, based on learning styles inventories and study habits. Our Supplemental Instruction (SI) offers a scheduled time for any student to get individualized help from a certified teacher in the content areas of college English and Math. SAT/ACT prep classes are offered to support students who need to focus on improving standardized test scores. Struggling freshmen and sophomores are supported even further in a course called REBOOT, focused specifically on making sure students are completing assignments successfully in both high school and college courses.

Once a week, students meet in a classroom setting for HOUSE, through which teachers serve as advisors for students, following them for their three years of high school leading into their Senior year. HOUSE allows teachers to present everything from CPR training to Dave Ramsey's Financial Literacy course (through a partnership with a local bank). HOUSE teachers also present lessons in team-building, goal-setting, stress management, and other topics students may need. HOUSE also allows time for Connections, an integral component of our "iConnect" theme, providing a time for students to share concerns and set goals in a group setting, knowing that they are supported by their teachers and peers. Connections are confidential, and often very intense emotional experiences that enable students to voice issues and share successes they might not otherwise feel comfortable sharing. Senior year, HOUSE becomes Senior Seminar, led by our school counselor, who helps focus students on university admissions, financial aid workshops, and scholarship applications. This small group time every week with our school counselor is invaluable, and is a benefit of the small size and structure of our school.

In addition to the REaCH curriculum, students can take selected courses offered by their district comprehensive high school that are not offered at REaCH such as Band, Chorus and Agriculture. In addition, students have an extensive list of online courses, including any and all Advanced Placement level courses and remedial Credit Recovery courses. While it may take extensive individual scheduling, the REaCH counselor and administrator work diligently with the community college to make sure that students are able to access any curricular interest they may have.

REaCH faculty and staff believe in a common set of high standards and expectations in every class that ensure every student graduates well-prepared not only for a four-year university, but for life. A common set of standards for all students eliminates tracking. REaCH upholds the common standards in every classroom for high quality, rigorous instruction. Our teachers demonstrate personalization by knowing our students well and using strategies tailored to methods that will help them succeed academically. The faculty at REaCH have redefined professionalism to create a shared vision so that all school staff take responsibility for the success of every student. The empowerment of shared leadership embedded in a culture of high expectations and a collaborative work environment supports the success of each student.

2. Reading/English:

Students at REaCH take Honors English I and II during their freshman year. Juniors take Research Academy, a course the REaCH English department designed to allow students to complete their

Graduation Project. During their sophomore and senior years, students take an additional four English courses at the college level in composition, as well as American and British Literature. The English curriculum is designed to challenge students to read, write, and think critically. Emphasis is placed on students' being able to form their own opinions about texts, and to coherently defend their opinions with textual evidence. Questioning both informational and literary texts follows the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, allowing students to move from concrete to inferential thinking. Students read a diverse canon of texts, including literary classics, historical documents, current publications, and technical manuals.

Since our school is a 1:1 computer initiative school, every student has a school-issued MacBook. English teachers work diligently to provide both paper and digital texts to students, always free of charge, and always with an option to access the texts through their laptops. REaCH teachers are also keenly aware that many of our students do not have Internet access at home (for financial and geographic reasons) and always modify instruction so that time is provided for those students whose only Internet access is during the school day. In order to further address different learning styles, English teachers at REaCH also scour the Internet and other sources for free audiobooks of the material to be covered in class. Students benefit from being allowed the choice of methods for reading materials based on their learning style.

REaCH English teachers conduct Literacy Circles (similar to book clubs) where students are given different novels based on their reading ability. While the Literacy Circles readings may differ, they are chosen based on the connection to a common Big Idea. In this way, every student is able to be challenged by the text without the stigma of ability grouping. Additionally, all teachers use Study Island, a subscription service purchased by our school which allows individualized practice for every high school curriculum taught. The difficulty level can be modified for both struggling and high-achieving students, unbeknownst to the students themselves.

3. Mathematics:

The mathematics curriculum at REaCH is highly individualized, based in part on foundational coursework students completed at the middle school level. Students can gain credit for Algebra I and Geometry at the middle school, so their first mathematics course at REaCH varies from Foundational Algebra I to Honors Algebra II. At the high school level, ALL students complete Honors Algebra II and Advanced Functions. Higher levels of college math, including Survey of Mathematics, Statistics, College Algebra, Precalculus, and Calculus I, II, and III are options for their two-math college requirement.

Our highly qualified math teachers collaborate daily during common planning, weekly student concern meetings, Supplemental Instruction, and Friday Academic Support to ensure that each student, whether at, above, or below grade level, can be successful. In addition to direct classroom instruction, our math teachers use technology such as Study Island, Braingenie, and Bamboo tablets to engage students in problem solving and real-world mathematical application. Study Island and Braingenie technologies also allow for skill individualization for each student without other students' knowledge that the difficulty level has been modified for differentiation. Students are engaged while practicing the skills customized for their ability level.

Students consistently show a high level of conceptual understanding and accurate computation, and respond with appropriate answers or procedures. They demonstrate math capability by using a variety of problem-solving strategies. In Algebra I and II, students continue the study of algebraic concepts. Using technology, they model and solve problems by performing operations with real numbers, polynomials, and matrices; graph using linear, quadratic, and exponential functions; and collect and interpret data. Students solve systems of linear equations and inequalities in two variables. They use mathematical concepts developed in previous years for real world applications.

In addition to mathematical concepts, our math teachers incorporate writing across the curriculum. REaCH students journal daily in their math classes to explain the procedure for solving problems, to qualify their methods for finding the answers, and to verbally express their mathematical logic. REaCH

students also complete low, mid, and high-stakes writing assignments (as they do in EVERY high school class) related to a mathematics topic. From researching mathematicians to exploring careers involving math, student writing is ever-present in their math courses.

4. Additional Curriculum Area:

Due to the extremely rigorous content of our core curriculum, some REaCH students needed additional support to be successful. To address this need, we added a course to our curriculum called REBOOT. Similar to the method of restarting a computer, these students were identified as struggling and in need of a fresh start. To qualify for REBOOT, the student failed one or more core high school courses, and needed a more structured, supportive environment. The REBOOT class is our top tier of intervention strategies for students who have not been successful with after-school tutoring and Friday Academic Support. Scheduled as a separate course, REBOOT pairs students with content area teachers who use technology (such as Google Docs) to communicate on a daily basis with classroom teachers to ensure students are completing assignments on time. Presently, we have twenty of our freshmen and sophomore students scheduled in REBOOT, and we are working toward reducing that number each semester. In addition to individualized instruction, we communicate with the distance learning advisor to assess the current progress in their online college courses. Students are also required to keep a reflective journal working with topics such as goal setting, time management, and organizational skills. REBOOT teachers contact parents to elicit support in an effort to help students be successful. REBOOT teachers also conference with classroom teachers during weekly Student Concern Meetings to clarify assignments and gather any further information students may need. The on-going communication among all stakeholders keeps the students accountable and ensures that they are on-task, eliminating any miscommunications that may negatively affect student performance.

REaCH National Honor Society members serve as tutors during REBOOT to help with difficult subjects. Peer tutoring provides our students with an additional perspective, offering a different point of view and a comfortable environment in which they can receive academic help. Tutors are able to give back to their REaCH community while also strengthening their own content knowledge and interpersonal skills. REBOOT students gain an elective credit on a pass/fail basis, but more importantly, they gain study skills and a sense of accountability for their academic success.

5. Instructional Methods:

REaCH partners with the North Carolina New Schools initiative to focus on the needs of our students as individual learners. Our program fosters active learning, engaging students in every class, every day. Visitors to our classrooms would see teachers talking less and students talking more. The goal in every classroom, every day, is for EVERY student to read, write, think, and speak. With small class sizes facilitated by caring teachers, students work in groups, discussing and sharing ideas, challenging each other, and solving application-based problems. Teachers question, guide, and push students hard to think clearly and communicate effectively. New Schools calls this approach the Common Instructional Framework (CIF). The CIF is a defined set of research-based classroom strategies that consistently improve student performance. The following strategies give all students of all skill levels access to the complex information needed to meet state and college-ready standards and engage all students, requiring each to take an active role in their own learning: Collaborative Group Work, Writing to Learn, Literacy Groups, Questioning, Scaffolding, and Classroom Talk. In addition to the CIF, REaCH teachers instruct under the guiding principles of rigor, relevance, relationships, respect, and responsibility (the 5 R's). Teachers at REaCH know high-quality instruction is our top priority, but also know that the material taught in the classroom must apply to the real world. Students are given opportunities for project-based learning, real-world application, field trips, and guest speakers that are related not only to our subject-specific curriculum, but also to our school, community, and world.

In addition to the 5 R's, teachers work hard outside of the classroom environment in order to achieve student success. Every day after school, teachers offer "Homework Club," a time for students to get one-

on-one tutoring for the day's lesson or for any topic with which they are struggling. This "extended day" is beneficial to students who need extra individual assistance to achieve their academic success. Supplemental Instruction is offered in both English and Math by certified teachers during the school day, allowing students to seek help with both their high school and college courses.

Though it sounds cliché, our teachers know our students as individuals, and know their background, home situation, challenges, and strengths. By efforts such as home visits, consistent parent communication, and a positive school culture that promotes a family atmosphere, REaCH teachers are able to tailor instruction to best fit the needs of every student.

6. Professional Development:

Since the inception of REaCH, our faculty and staff have actively engaged in ongoing, intensive, purposeful, research-based professional development. School-based professional development focuses on our school's goals, mission and, New Schools Design Principles: Personalization, Ready for College, Powerful Teaching and Learning, Redefined Professionalism, Purposeful Design, and Leadership. Using the Personalization design principle, teachers spend common planning once a week to discuss specific instructional strategies for reluctant learners to enable teachers to be successful with a particular student. Joint staff development and meetings with our partner community college staff have led to the development of shared student learning outcomes and common assessment rubrics. Within Powerful Teaching and Learning, our Common Instructional Framework is consistent and pervasive throughout the school. Modeling Redefined Professionalism, teachers spend professional development time sharing their expertise in technology integration strategies and their effectiveness in individual classrooms. Teachers also take on leadership roles equally, often leading professional development at the school, district, regional, and state levels, while also sharing in the leadership of the day-to-day school operations.

While REaCH teachers attend district and state-wide professional development opportunities (such as Common Core training) related to all schools in our district, we also spend high-quality time working with the New Schools support staff from across the state. REaCH faculty spend common planning time every Wednesday with our New Schools Instructional Coach. Visiting our classrooms and observing instruction, and designing weekly professional development based on her classroom visits and teacher input, the coach's support is invaluable.

The faculty and staff at REaCH participate in book studies, using Critical Friends protocols to delve into educational study and improvement. Our latest book study, *The Leader in Me*, has helped our faculty incorporate *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey into our classrooms and school culture, and led to our development of our "iConnect" school-wide theme. Our school also participates in in-house "instructional rounds," observing each other's classroom practices and following procedures to share what we have seen and learned, all with the goal of improving instruction school-wide. We also participate in rounds outside of our own school, visiting and inviting other schools from the New Schools initiative for rounds. Every summer, faculty attend the New Schools Summer Institute, and are able to learn from (and present to) other schools from across the network.

7. School Leadership:

The culture of Rutherford Early College is one of shared leadership and accountability for problem identification, solution generation, and strategy implementation to meet school and individual student needs. Our faculty and staff work together with administration in a spirit of equality and mutual respect. Staff members engage in a dynamic process of refining our mission in order to achieve continuous improvement for the school. Our principal has designed our school schedule so that teachers have shared common planning each day when they can collaborate on lesson plans, discuss student issues and concerns, brainstorm ideas, and share strategies that have been successful.

REaCH's school administrator is visible and approachable by faculty and students alike. Visiting

classrooms every day and meeting with student government leadership to discuss school issues and ideas, our principal acts as a catalyst to seek new solutions and encourage risk-taking in meeting individual student needs. Additionally, the principal leads discussions among faculty about implementing the Common Instructional Framework, Common Core and Essential Standards, and facilitates book studies for continuous school improvement. Representing both the school and our district, the principal involves stakeholders, parents, and the business community alike, and serves as an advocate for our program. Our principal also works closely with Isothermal Community College, our partner, to build relationships with college administration and faculty by serving on various college committees.

There is truly a sense of community and family among our employees. The school theme of “iConnect” applies not only to our students and their interactions, but also to the sense of connectedness among all employees. From organizing college visits to professional development, the administration, faculty and staff go above and beyond to do their part in the big picture of educating our students. Our staff members treat each other as equals, and value each other’s opinions and strengths. Leading by example, our administration empowers all employees to be a part of the process of self- assessment and continuous improvement.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 9 Test: Algebra I

Edition/Publication Year: 2003/2008 Publisher: NC DPI

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
Level III and IV	100	95	86	82	83
Level IV	38	21	43	41	25
Number of students tested	16	19	7	27	24
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Level III and IV	Masked	93		67	Masked
Level IV	Masked				Masked
Number of students tested	9	15		12	7
2. African American Students					
Level III and IV	Masked		Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked		Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	3		1	5	2
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Level III and IV	Masked	Masked		Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked		Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	1	1		1	2
4. Special Education Students					
Level III and IV					
Level IV					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Level III and IV					
Level IV					
Number of students tested					
6. White					
Level III and IV	100	94	Masked	90	79
Level IV			Masked		
Number of students tested	10	16	6	20	19
NOTES:					
Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.					

13NC2

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 9 Test: English I

Edition/Publication Year: 2004

Publisher: NC DPI

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
Level III and IV	100	100	100	98	90
Level IV	52	55	51	63	48
Number of students tested	31	44	39	40	40
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Level III and IV	100	100	100	95	93
Level IV					
Number of students tested	20	22	22	19	15
2. African American Students					
Level III and IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	3	1	3	5	4
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Level III and IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	3	2	4	1	3
4. Special Education Students					
Level III and IV					
Level IV					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Level III and IV					
Level IV					
Number of students tested					
6. White					
Level III and IV	100	100	100	100	91
Level IV					
Number of students tested	23	39	22	30	32
NOTES:					
Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.					

13NC2